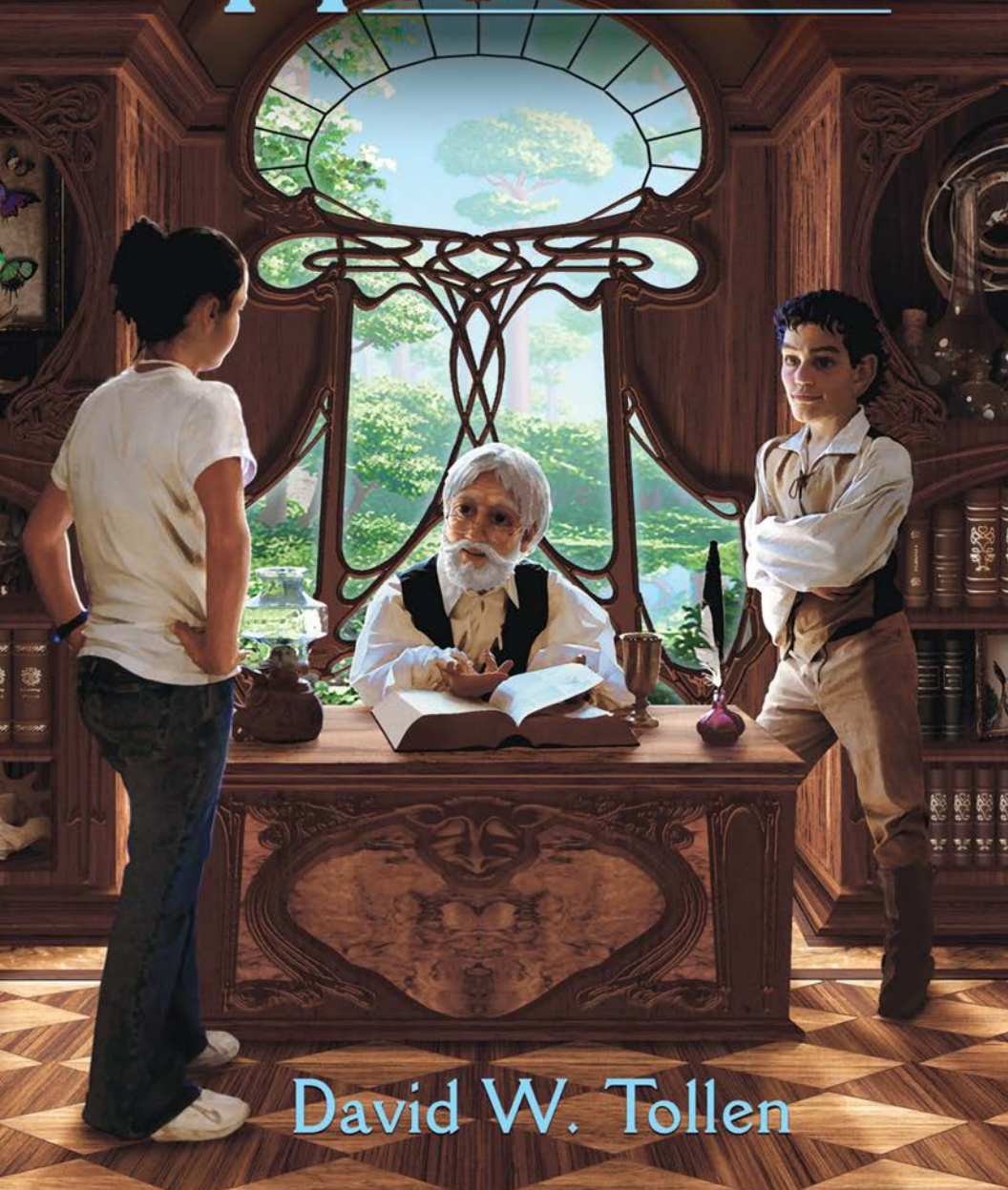


SAMPLE

SECRETS of HOMINEA



David W. Tollen

Copyright © 2019 by David W. Tollen

Except as specifically set forth below on this page, all rights are reserved, and no part of this book sample may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the author.

Information regarding the full book, *Secrets of Hominea*:

ISBN: 978-0-9854517-6-9 (softcover)

ISBN: 978-0-9854517-7-6 (ebook)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019904064

Published by Winifred Press, San Francisco, California

www.WinifredPress.com

www.PintsofHistory.com

Book Design by Lorie DeWorken, www.MindtheMargins.com

Cover art by Mark Ferrari. Interior map (p. 19) by David W. Tollen.

License for this sample:

If you received this sample directly through the Pints of History website (including its author), you may keep a copy on any computer you own or control and also print a copy, all for your personal, non-commercial use and enjoyment. Please share this sample only by sending a link to <https://PintsofHistory.com/>, so recipients can download their own copies. Please don't distribute copies yourself. ("You" refers to natural persons, not organizations. And "this sample" refers to this sample of the book *Secrets of Hominea*, including text, illustrations, and maps.)

PRAISE FOR

SECRETS of HOMINEA



★ WINNER ★

Independent Press Award, Distinguished Favorite

“A magical, educational novel — a series of connected short stories teaching science and history, ideal for homeschooling, distance learning, and the classroom!”

SECRETS of HOMINEA

David W. Tollen

ALSO BY DAVID W. TOLLEN

Fiction for Young People

THE JERICHO RIVER, An Adventure through History

Nonfiction

*THE TECH CONTRACTS HANDBOOK, Cloud Computing
Agreements, Software Licenses, and Other IT Contracts
for Lawyers and Businesspeople*

For information, please visit www.DavidTollen.com.
There, you will also find lessons plans related to this book
and other resources about science and history.

CONTENTS

1. The Hole in the Hillside	1
2. Voyage of the Poodle	13
3. Chumley and the Archduke	32
4. The Secret of the Unicorns	56
5. Reedleaper and the Garbage-Eaters	78
6. The Gnome King's Last Stand.	94
7. The Sea of Tears	109
8. Professor Darkhorn	129
 Learning Guide	 155

2

VOYAGE OF THE POODLE

ALISON PULIDO'S NOTES

Back when Professor Adicus' beard was mostly brown, he worked as science officer on a ship called the *Poodle*. It had a crew of trolls, and the professor was the only dwarf on board. During one voyage, a terrible storm caught the *Poodle*. The winds blew for days and sent the ship far off course. Then disaster struck.

The *Poodle's* sails snapped and billowed in the angry wind. Troll sailors stumbled across the deck and crawled through the rigging. Their blue and white tunics stood out against the gray skies and the planks of the deck. Professor Adicus clung to the bridge rail and watched in awe. He wondered if he'd have the courage to climb the rigging in this wind or to run across the wet, pitching deck.

The *Poodle* was small for a high seas trader, but she was tough and had weathered many storms. The professor had little doubt she'd survive this one. He was more concerned about the captain. Captain Shuffelbower had behaved strangely all day. He'd often giggled while shouting orders, and he'd actually burst into tears when a sailor

reported a broken capstan. And while scolding the boatswain for her sloppy appearance, he'd bellowed, "Preen those feathers or I'll give you a pecking you won't forget!"

Now the captain stood at the edge of the bridge deck, grasping the forward rail and watching the sailors on the main deck below. Suddenly, he stretched and turned on one heel. "Lieutenant Brinestone!" he called, swaying with the rocking ship as he faced the trolls gathered around the helm's great wheel. "Lieutenant, you have the bridge." The officers stared. The captain did not usually hand over command during a storm.

"Excuse me, sir?" said Lieutenant Brinestone. He was tall, even for a troll, and so lanky that he seemed to be drowning in his high-collared uniform coat.

"You heard me," snapped the captain, scratching one of his pointed ears. "I'm going below. There's a walrus in my quarters, and I must hide the chicks." He gave the lieutenant a satisfied nod and turned on his heel once again. Then he sauntered down to the main deck, maintaining his balance with impressive skill on the rocking stairway. Soon he was gone behind the officers' hatch, whistling as if strolling down a country lane.

Professor Adicus and everyone else stared, mouths open. But a burst of salty spray reminded them they had no time for questions. "You! Get back to work!" Brinestone barked at a gaping sailor. "Everyone, put your backs into it! Batten down that hatch! Get the tarp back on those crates!" A shiver of relief ran across the deck as the trolls realized someone sane still commanded the ship.

The officers and crew fought the storm for hours. All the while, the professor kept a tight grip on the bridge rail, afraid a sudden lurch might toss him overboard, but afraid too that he'd be sick in the stale air of his pitching cabin below. He wasn't really a sailor, and he was too small to be much use anyway. The *Poodle*, of course, had been built for trolls nearly twice the size of any dwarf.

Finally the wind fell, just as the late afternoon sun lit the strip

of sky beneath the clouds. The crew drew a deep breath. But then Captain Shuffelbower returned to the bridge. Once again, Professor Adicus and the trolls stared. The captain had taken off his uniform and replaced it with ... a pair of polka-dotted undershorts. He was carrying an enormous clock, some brass tools, and two books. The captain nodded and smiled as he bore his load past Lieutenant Brinestone and the stunned bridge crew. "He's gone mad!" cried Brinestone as the captain approached the starboard rail. "Somebody stop him!"

"Long live the flying penguins!" screamed the captain. He heaved the clock, tools, and books over the rail. Then he flapped his arms and tried to jump overboard himself, but two quick-thinking sailors grabbed him and pulled him back to the deck. "Unhand me, you egg-burglars!" he cried.

Lieutenant Brinestone had rushed to the railing. He half shrieked as the two books sank out of sight. The clock and tools had already disappeared beneath the waves.

"What is it?" demanded Professor Adicus. "What did he throw?"

"What did he throw?" cried the lieutenant. "What did he throw? Why nothing more than the ship's log and all our navigation tools! We're miles off course, and without the chronometer or sextant or almanac—or *the log*—we can't tell where we are! We could be thousands of miles from anywhere, and the captain's gone mad and stranded us!" He buried his face in his hands.

"Land ho!" cried the lookout from the crow's nest atop the main mast. "Island off the starboard bow!"

Brinestone ordered the helms-troll to come about, and soon they all saw it. A mountain rose above the restless waves, dark in the orange-pink light of the setting sun. It seemed a realm of trees: a jungle. The professor saw no lights, no smoke from chimneys or fire pits, no houses or huts: no signs of civilization or even of people.



The next morning, Lieutenant Brinestone and Professor Adicus met with the ship's doctor in the sickbay. The doctor had thrown open the round portholes, filling the narrow, wooden bay with fresh air and circles of sunlight. The three stood looking at the captain, who slept tied to a cot. "There's no doubt about it," said the doctor, stroking her sharp chin, "the captain has rat madness."

"Rat madness?" asked the professor.

"Yes. It's a rare disease. Rats carry it, and sailors catch it when they breathe in dust from droppings, or the rats get into the food or water. That must be what's happened here. And then once people start getting sick, they infect each other."

"Is there a cure?" asked Brinestone.

"Fortunately, there is. All you need is some beanstalk vines and spriggan mushrooms, a few other things. You grind them into a powder and mix with water." Her long face wrinkled. "It tastes awful, but it does the trick. Anyway, you can get the ingredients in almost any apothecary shop—but we don't have any onboard." Her brow furrowed. "With what I've got, I can keep the captain alive for about a month. We've got to get back to civilization and get the cure by then. If we don't, Captain Shuffelbower will die."

Brinestone moaned. "I don't see how we can get anywhere in a month. We don't even know where we were *before* the storm, much less now. We don't know which way to sail."

"It's worse than that," said the doctor. She led them to another cot, where a sailor in yellow pajamas lay smiling. "Surfington, tell the lieutenant who you are."

"Why I'm Surfington," the sailor answered, his angular troll's features softening into a smile. "I'm king of the pumpkin people. I was on my way to do battle with the cucumber tribes when my ship—"

"Okay, enough, Your Majesty!" snapped Brinestone. He turned back to the doctor. "I get the picture. How many others?"

"I've got six more with early signs of rat madness. But on a small ship ... it tends to spread pretty fast. Most of us will probably be sick

within a week or two. And this gets a lot worse than just hallucinations. Patients start bashing their own brains out because they think they're possessed. Or they swallow nails to build a house in their stomach ... or jump overboard because they think they can fly, like the captain. And if none of that kills you, the fever will, or you'll just stop eating and drinking." She looked Brinestone in the eye. "Rat madness could easily kill us all."

"This is just great," whined Brinestone. "My first command and my whole crew's going to die, including me. I should've been a baker like my mother wanted."

"Lieutenant," said Professor Adicus, "there must be a way to figure our course and get back to civilization, even without navigation tools and charts. Then we can get the medicine on time."

"Right, must be." Brinestone's eyebrows drew together. "How?"

"Well, we're anchored off an island, right? Which island is it? If we could just figure that out, we'd know where we are. Then we'd know which way to sail, more or less."

"But it's deserted!" complained Brinestone. "And all these tropical islands look alike. We're doomed!"

"It can't be that hard to narrow it down," insisted Professor Adicus. "Let's at least check whatever maps we've got left before writing our obituaries."

The professor and the lieutenant spent the next half hour in the captain's handsome quarters. Brinestone spread a map out on the captain's oak table, beneath the light of the great stern windows. "Good news," he cried after poring over the yellowy paper. "I know where we must be." His finger traced a circle on the map, across a mostly empty expanse of ocean. "Based on the wind speed, the storms' likely direction ... everything, we really should be somewhere around here. And there's only one island for miles and miles, so that must be the one we've found." His finger stabbed at a tiny circle marked on the map. "See, it's called Pighome Island. And it's not too far east of civilization. So if we're at Pighome, all we have

to do is sail straight west and we'll easily make it in a month." He clasped his long hands and swooned. "We're saved!"

"Hmm." Professor Adicus rubbed his beard and peered at the map. "Well, I agree with your estimates, but I'm afraid it may not be that simple. There's another island in the same general area as Pighome. It's called Dodolypso Island. We could be there too."

"Dodolypso? Can't be. How come it's not on the map?"

"Your map-maker probably never heard of it. Ten thousand years ago, faery sailors from Atlantis discovered a deserted tropical island somewhere in these waters. They named it Dodolypso Island. No one's really sure where it is, but historians think it's about three weeks east of Pighome. If the storms blew us east, we could easily be there." He smiled up at the troll. "I've actually been hoping we'd stumble across Dodolypso. It's quite thrilling, don't you think?"

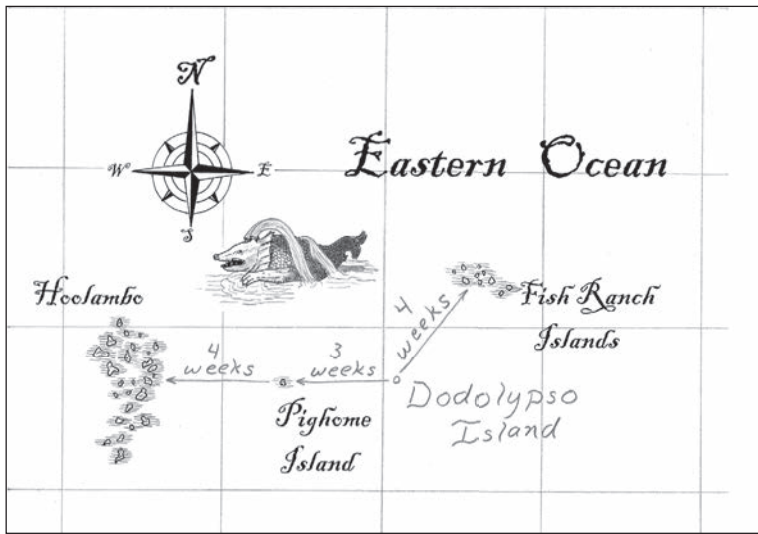
"What?" squeaked Brinestone.

"We may have found an island last seen by the First People in the days of their glory. I call that thrilling."

"Yeah," cried Brinestone, holding his belly as if he might throw up, "except that if this *is* Dodolypso Island, we're dead. If we have to sail west for three weeks even to *reach* Pighome Island, and then *another* four weeks to civilization, we'll be too late!"

"That's only if we sail *west*," said Professor Adicus patiently. How had anyone so excitable ever risen to the rank of lieutenant? "May I write on this map?" Brinestone nodded, and the professor picked up a charcoal pencil. "Dodolypso Island is probably somewhere around here." He drew a small circle on the map and labeled it *Dodolypso Island*. "As you can see, it's not far from the Fish Ranch Islands." He drew an arrow from Dodolypso to a group of islands to the northeast. "If we are at Dodolypso, all we have to do is sail north and east. In four weeks or less, we'll reach the Fish Ranch Islands. We can get the cure there."

"Then as long as we figure out which island we've found, we'll be fine, right?" Brinestone tugged at the lanky brown hair hanging over his pointed ears.



“Right. If we’re at Pighome Island, we sail straight west.” He drew more arrows. “If we’re at Dodolypso, we sail northeast. Either way, we can get to civilization in a month and get the cure on time. But we’ve got to guess right. If we sail the wrong way, we won’t get anywhere for a lot more than a month. We’ll be lost, and we’ll all die of rat madness on the open sea.”

• • •

They agreed to meet again in a half hour. Professor Adicus returned to his own tiny cabin and pored over his books of history, while Brinestone remained, reading about Pighome Island.

“OK,” said the professor when they met again in the captain’s quarters. “Tell me everything you’ve learned.”

“Well, there wasn’t too much about Pighome in the captain’s books. All I really learned is it’s a deserted tropical island. Some primitive goblin tribes used to live there, but they disappeared centuries ago. Now there’s nothing but a bunch of wild pigs and monkeys and some other animals.”

"Perfect!" exclaimed Professor Adicus. "There are no pigs or monkeys on Dodolypso, so we should have no trouble telling the two apart." He held up a burgundy leather-bound book. Gold lettering on the cover read, *Voyages of the Ancient Faeries*, by G. H. Pudley. Professor Adicus opened to a page marked "Dodolypso Island" and ran a finger along the text. "According to the ancient ship-master's account, Dodolypso was a deserted tropical island with few animals. There were fish and birds, but no land animals except insects and flightless birds. No mammals, in other words."

"Alright," said Brinestone. "So we go ashore, and if we see a lot of flightless birds and no other land animals, we'll know this is Dodolypso Island, and we sail northeast."

"Correct. And if we see pigs or monkeys or any other mammals, then it must be Pighome, and we sail due west. Simple."

Brinestone grinned. "I feel better already."



They pulled ashore near the mouth of a stream. "Wait for us here, by the rowboat," Brinestone ordered Lisafoam, the burly chief who led the detachment of rowers. "This shouldn't take long."

They made their way across the white sand separating the ocean's deep blue from the emerald jungle, then hovered at the edge of the trees, peering into the shadows. "Well, no time like the present," Brinestone finally said. He strode in among the trees, following the stream, and the professor trotted after him. As they left the beach's blazing sunlight, Professor Adicus felt as if they were entering a solemn, green temple. He heard nothing but birdsong and the whispering of the water.

They had little trouble making their way, except where the jungle grew right up to the streambed, blocking their path. Brinestone had brought a machete and the professor had his walking stick, so they chopped and swatted their way through the overgrown vegetation.

They both kept a sharp lookout for animals. But for nearly half an hour, they saw nothing but multi-colored birds hopping and singing among the branches. Flightless birds would have told them something, but the professor felt sure both Pighome and Dodolypso had plenty of regular, flying birds.

"I think I see something!" whispered Brinestone as they rounded a bend in the stream. He pointed at the thick trees on the other side of the water. At first Professor Adicus saw only green leaves and slivers of blue sky. Then movement caught his eye: something furry and brown ran along a narrow branch. But before he could get a clear look, the little beast leapt to another branch and disappeared into the leaves.

"What was it?" cried Brinestone. "Was it a squirrel?"

"I don't think so. It didn't have a fuzzy tail and its face was too pointy. I don't know *what* it was."

"Anyway, who cares?" Brinestone grinned. "That definitely wasn't a bird, flightless or otherwise. It was a mammal, right? So that's all we need to know. There were no mammals on Dodolypso, so this must be Pighome Island. We should sail west. Mission accomplished!"

"Yes." Professor Adicus spoke slowly. "I guess that's right." But something bothered him. The squirrel-thing seemed strange, but he couldn't put his finger on why. He wished he'd gotten a better look.

"You're probably right," he finally said. "Whatever it was, it had fur and looked like a rodent, so it must be a mammal. But let's explore a little more. I'd feel better if we could see a few more beasts—especially a pig. Then we'd *know* this is Pighome Island."

Brinestone sighed dramatically. He was feeling the heat in his heavy blue uniform, the professor suspected. But they kept moving.

"Professor," said the troll after a while, "why would Dodolypso have only birds? I mean, why wouldn't there be any mammals or reptiles or other land animals?"

"Actually, many small islands have no mammals or reptiles. Animals that can't fly have no way to reach an island far from the mainland." He rubbed his beard. "No way, that is, except by boat."

You said goblin tribes once lived on Pighome Island. They probably brought the first pigs and the other land animals in their canoes. But as far as we know, no one's ever settled Dodolypso. So no land animals could get there."

"What about the flightless birds on Dodolypso? Obviously they didn't fly there."

"Ah, but their ancestors *weren't* flightless, were they? Flying sea-birds probably landed on Dodolypso millions of years ago. With no mammals or other land animals to eat them, some found they could live safely on the ground. They didn't need their wings, so over hundreds of centuries, they evolved into flightless birds. That's how it is with all flightless birds: dodos and ostriches and the rest. They all had flying ancestors that started living like land animals, so they all lost their—oof!"

He'd stumbled into Brinestone, who'd stopped cold. "What is it?" Professor Adicus whispered, rubbing his squashed nose. "Do you see something?"

The stream had broadened into a pond in the middle of a clearing. Near the far shore, a brown, furry beast floated on its back. The troll and the dwarf stared and the creature stared back, without the least sign of concern.

"What is it?" Brinestone whispered. Professor Adicus shook his head. The creature looked like a beaver, but it didn't have a flat tail or buckteeth. And its snout was too sharp. "Could it be an otter?" continued Brinestone.

"I don't think so," whispered the professor. "It's too fat." More than anything, it looked like a giant, swimming mouse.

"Well, that's really it, then," said Brinestone aloud, after watching the floating creature another minute or so. "I don't know what that is, but it's definitely a mammal, not a flightless bird. So we must be on Pighome Island."

"I guess you're right," sighed Professor Adicus. "I guess we can—" A loud, screechy roar cut him short. The animal in the water

hissed and splashed ashore, and the professor heard a heavy rustling in the jungle behind them. He turned just as two animals burst from the trees. They were bigger than coyotes and had tan pelts and fangs. And they were charging right at the professor and Brinestone.

The troll and dwarf screamed and collided as they tried to run, knocking themselves to the ground. Brinestone regained his feet too slowly and the first beast slammed into him, knocking the machete out of his hand. Professor Adicus jumped the other way and fell again. He rolled over and saw both beasts snapping at Brinestone. The professor scrambled to his feet and clubbed one of the monsters from behind with his walking stick. He managed to dislodge it from Brinestone, but then the other beast turned and charged him. The hideous mouth snapped at his face, and he saw a long nose, whiskers, and yellow fangs. *I'm done for*, he thought, gagging at the creature's hideous breath. But the monster's lunge fell short, and it yelped. Brinestone leapt forward, machete in hand, and swiped again at the monster's hind legs.

Faced with the machete, the two beasts—one of them bleeding—screeched and backed away. After snarling and growling for a moment, they bolted back into the bushes. The professor and the lieutenant watched with open mouths as the monsters' whip-like tails disappeared into the jungle.

"What were *those*?" moaned Brinestone. "Some kind of super-ugly hyenas?"

"I don't know, but they—" Another screechy roar rose out of the jungle. Yet another followed it, and another, all coming from downstream.

"They're calling for reinforcements!" cried the professor.

"Oh, great," cried Brinestone. "Now we're going to die without even waiting a month!"

"Run!" Professor Adicus grabbed the troll's arm and pulled him upstream. They sprinted along the bank, hurtling over bushes and logs. The roars stayed close behind, and the professor felt certain he heard more than two beasts.

The troll and dwarf ran on and on. Every time they slowed, thinking they'd lost the monsters, they heard more snarls and roars close by. Of course, they were headed the wrong way. The beach and rowboat were downriver, not up. But circling back would have led them into the monsters' fangs. So they headed inland, their legs burning as they climbed the island's slope. Soon the professor was heaving and dizzy. "I've got to stop!" he finally cried. He stumbled to his knees in a bed of broad leaves by the riverbank. Brinestone stood guard, brandishing the machete and looking around. After only a minute or two, they heard another snarl. Four of the monsters broke from the trees on the other side of the stream.

"Come on!" screamed Brinestone. He hoisted the dwarf onto his back and sprinted away from the river, still headed uphill. He carried the professor on and on, crashing through the trees without slowing to cut his way. Then he staggered, heaving, and tumbled the dwarf to the ground, and the two stumbled, walked, and ran even further.

The monsters' roars came close several times. But finally, after what seemed like hours, the professor realized he'd heard no roars for a long while. Evening darkness had begun to creep over the jungle, but the companions continued uphill for almost an hour more, until they began running into trees in the darkness. At last they collapsed in the soft dirt of a small clearing.

"I really, really should've become a baker," moaned Brinestone after they'd caught their breath. "Those have got to be the ugliest, most hideous, vile creatures in all of Hominea. What can they possibly be?"

"I have no idea," huffed the professor. "I thought I knew the animal kingdom pretty well, but I've never heard of anything like that. And there's something strange ..." He scratched his head. "There's something about them. They remind me of something ... just like the squirrel-thing and the beaver-thing."

They stared into the darkness, wishing for the comforts of the *Poodle*. "Brinestone," the professor finally said, "You saved my life back there. Thank you for carrying me."

"You saved me too," said the troll, "when you clubbed them by the pond. Thank you too."

"We'll have to sneak back down in the morning. Maybe we won't enter their territory if we go straight down from here and avoid the stream."

"Or maybe the whole island's their territory, and this time tomorrow we'll be fresh spare-ribs."



Professor Adicus woke to morning light and found himself eye-to-eye with a sky blue beetle crawling in the black dirt near his face. *How lovely*, he thought. Then a tiny rodent popped out of a hole a few inches away and snatched the bug. The furry beast disappeared with its breakfast as quickly as it had come. "What was that?" the professor said as he sat up. It had looked like a mouse.

"What was what?" Brinestone was leaning against a tree. Bright blue sky arched above the jungle's leafy ceiling, promising another hot day.

"I saw a little ... like a mouse."

"Another mammal, eh?" The lieutenant grinned. "Well that really settles it, don't you think?" He seemed calm. "I mean, we saw all those mammals yesterday, and no flightless birds. This must be Pighome Island, right?"

"Well, perhaps this is Dodolypso Island and someone *brought* all those mammals, after the Atlantis faeries came."

"Do you really think that makes sense?"

"No," admitted the professor. "I mean, why would anyone do that? And where would they find all these animals no one's ever seen? And if someone did bring the animals, it would've been a huge project. Someone would've written about it." He sighed. "I don't feel very confident, but sometimes a scientist has to go where the evidence points, even if it's not satisfying. This seems to be Pighome Island." He stood up.

Brinestone stood too. "I'm sorry you didn't find your historical island. But I'm sick of this awful place, and I'm starving. Let's get to the ship. The only danger there comes from rat madness, and soon we'll be headed for the cure."

They made their way down the slope, creeping along as quietly as possible and speaking in whispers. One mile of emerald jungle looked suspiciously like the next, but they knew the way must always be down. As the morning wore on, they saw more birds hopping about in the trees and another beaver-mouse-beast, but no flightless birds—or monsters. The professor hoped the monsters didn't hunt by scent. After walking, running, and sleeping in the same clothes, both explorers desperately needed a bath.

Around the middle of the day, they broke from the trees and found themselves on sunlit white sands. "At last!" whispered Professor Adicus. It wasn't the previous day's beach, and they saw no sign of the rowboat or the *Poodle*, but at least they'd escaped the jungle. "The rowboat must be off to the right," the professor continued. "Let's hurry."

They trudged along the hot sands, following the shoreline's curve, the jungle looming to their right. "I hope Lisafoam's still there waiting for us," said Brinestone, forgetting to whisper.

"Shhh!" hissed the professor.

They crossed several more beaches, each separated from its neighbor by a narrow, rocky peninsula. Finally, they saw something brown by the edge of the crystal blue water, far down a strip of white sand. "It's the rowboat!" cried Brinestone. "We're saved!"

"Be quiet!" hissed the professor.

Then it happened. A snarl rose from the trees, followed by heavy rustling.

"Something big's coming through the jungle!" yelped the professor.

"Run!" screamed Brinestone. The two pelted across the wet sand. Professor Adicus looked back as he ran. *Seven* of the hideous monsters had careened out of the trees.

The professor thought his chest and legs would explode as he sprinted, following Brinestone. Soon he could hear the lead beast panting and snarling behind him. *Maybe I should have become a baker too*, he thought as he realized he could not possibly reach the rowboat. The beast leapt for the kill, and the professor veered left, into the ocean, narrowly avoiding snapping fangs. He hurled himself into the waves and swam with all his might.

“Cast off!” screamed Brinestone at the rowboat down the beach and the sailors there. He dove into the foam, just ahead of another beast. The monster tore a mouthful from Brinestone’s soiled uniform jacket. But soon both the professor and the lieutenant were swimming in deep water. The monsters snarled and screeched from the shore, standing up to their haunches in seawater. “They won’t swim!” gasped Brinestone. “You’re a genius!”

The two treaded water until Lisafoam and the other sailors paddled up in the rowboat. The monsters roared even louder from the beach as the trolls pulled the swimmers aboard. “Where *were* you?” cried Lisafoam. “And what are those horrible things?”

“Later,” gasped Brinestone as he and the professor hugged and laughed and shivered with relief.



An hour later, Professor Adicus lay in his tiny quarters, washed and wearing clean clothes. Sunlight streamed in through his starboard-side porthole as he reclined on his cot, wolfing down dried meat and hard bread. He’d never liked sea rations, but today they seemed a king’s banquet. The *Poodle* was about to get underway. “We’re at Pighome Island,” Brinestone had told the officers. “We’ve got to sail west as soon as possible.”

A rustle drew the professor’s attention to the corner. A rat squeezed through a crack in the wooden bulkhead, next to his bright blue sea chest. It was sleek and brown with a whip-like tail and

beady eyes. *There's the culprit*, the professor thought. *That rat and its cousins nibbled our food and pooped on our ship and gave us rat madness. Now it's after my lunch.*

The rat nosed around the floorboards, its whiskers twitching. *It reminds me of that squirrel thing on the island*, Professor Adicus thought. *And it looks like the beaver-thing too, except it's smaller and thinner.* He shivered. If the rat were big as a coyote or hyena, it'd look a lot like the monsters.

"That's it!" he cried, leaping to his feet. The rat darted back to its hole, and Professor Adicus bolted out the door and ran down the alleyway. "Brinestone!" he cried as he burst into the lieutenant's quarters without knocking.

The lieutenant sat in a rickety chair, wearing a tattered bathrobe. He looked up with a mouth full of food. "Whaph?"

"It's *rats!*" Professor Adicus cried, jumping up and down on the wooden planks. "That's what all those animals on the island were—or used to be. We *are* at Dodolypso Island. It's just overrun with rats."

"Rats?" Brinestone gulped down his mouthful. "What are you talking about?"

"The ancient Atlantis faeries found an island with almost no land animals. But that doesn't mean they didn't *bring* any land animals. What animal travels on every ship everywhere in the whole world? *Rats*, that's what. Everywhere ships go, they bring little rat stowaways. Well the rats from the ancient faeries' ships must have gotten onto Dodolypso ten thousand years ago. That's what we saw."

"But rats don't jump like squirrels or live in the water, and they certainly don't come as big as those monsters."

"They evolved!" cried the professor. "When the rats got to Dodolypso on the faery ships, thousands of years ago, they found almost no land animals. There were no squirrels or beavers or moles or hyenas or anything. So they were free to live like those animals. Some moved into the trees, some swam in the ponds, some burrowed into the ground, and some even hunted other animals. Rats

are some of the most adaptable animals in the world. That's why they're everywhere."

Brinestone shook his head, his eyes wide. "Look," continued the professor, "the Atlantis faeries arrived ten thousand years ago, right? The rats must've snuck ashore in supply crates or something. The faeries left after a week or two, but the rats remained—for thousands of years. As time went by, their great-great-great-great-grandchildren *evolved*. The ones living in the trees got fast and nimble. The ones in the streams got fat and learned to float. The ones burrowing in the dirt became expert diggers and learned to catch bugs, and shrank. And the meat-eating rats got big and fierce. That's how evolution works. Ten thousand years isn't very long, but evolution moves faster when a species stumbles into a new environment. Besides, the rats didn't really change that much. They all still look ... rat-like!"

"But, but—"

"It's just like the flightless birds. Long before the rats arrived, flying birds found a nearly empty island. So they started living like land animals. That's why they lost their flying skills. Both the birds and the rats evolved to fit their new environment."

"But what *about* those flightless birds?" demanded Brinestone. "How come we didn't see any? If this *is* Dodolypso, we should've seen some, right? The ancient faeries said there were flightless birds."

"The rats must have wiped them out. Rats are tough mainland animals. After thousands of generations here, the birds were rare, delicate island creatures. They couldn't possibly compete with rats."

Brinestone frowned, but Professor Adicus hurried on: "Look, we didn't see any pigs or monkeys, but they're supposed to live on Pighome Island. So except for animals that look like rats, we found a nearly empty island. That's just what the ancient explorers said Dodolypso was: nearly empty. They probably didn't even notice when some of their ship's rats infested the jungle."

He took a deep breath and grabbed the lieutenant's arms. "All the evidence points to Dodolypso. The rats were the last piece of

the puzzle. After that, everything makes sense. So we can't be at Pighome, and that means we *can't* sail west. We'd never reach civilization on time. We're at Dodolypso. We've got to sail northeast!"



Nearly a month later, a battered, three-masted trader pulled into the main harbor of the Fish Ranch Islands. The old satyr harbormaster and his assistant stood on the dock as the ship bumped up against the heavy piers. "Where have you come from?" he called up to a troll sailor on deck.

"Where?" said the troll. "We've come from Surly Pony Valley. We would've gotten here sooner, but we ran into a puppy forest so we had to plant some parakeets."

The harbormaster looked at his assistant. "Rat madness," he said. "Run and get the doctor."

Almost the entire crew had rat madness. Half the sailors had been tied cots or beams for their own protection, and several were close to death. Even Professor Adicus found he couldn't think straight. He kept wondering if he'd really turned into a guitar-playing hippopotamus or just imagined it. But before he even set foot on land, a satyr nurse made him drink an awful potion. Within a few days, his head cleared. He'd survived and so had the rest of the crew. Even Captain Shuffelbower had pulled through.

Once he was up and about, Professor Adicus visited Brinestone, who'd been given a cot on the other side of the harbor's whitewashed infirmary. The troll lieutenant still wore hospital pajamas and hadn't yet risen from his bed, but his eyes were bright and clear. He looked sane. The professor sat beside him and the two talked over their adventure. "So," Brinestone finally said, "not only did you save all our lives, you've made a great discovery. Are you going to tell the world about Dodolypso Island?"

"Of course. It's my duty as a scholar. In fact, I've already started outlining my essay. I'll write it during our trip home."

“What will you call it?”

“As a matter of fact, I’ve just chosen a name. It’ll be called, ‘Rat Madness and the Re-Discovery of Dodolypso Island,’ by R. Adicus Aristoley, Ql.D.D. and Lieutenant L.E. Brinestone.”

Brinestone smiled. “So I’ll be a famous scholar too. Now I’m glad I didn’t become a baker.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



David W. Tollen is an award-winning and best-selling author writing books about history as well as technology law. He's also a member of the Board of Advisors for World History Encyclopedia, which publishes the world's most-read history encyclopedia. David earned a B.A. in history from U.C. Berkeley and has law degrees from Harvard Law School and Cambridge University.

David is an accomplished and sought-after public speaker and teacher. He has a unique ability to distill history and pre-history into fun and engaging content, and he brings it to groups of all ages as a speaker. Sample topics include the historic battle between ideology and human rights, the history of nationalism, prehistoric man-made climate change, and hunter-gatherer life, including what it does and doesn't tell us about our nature.

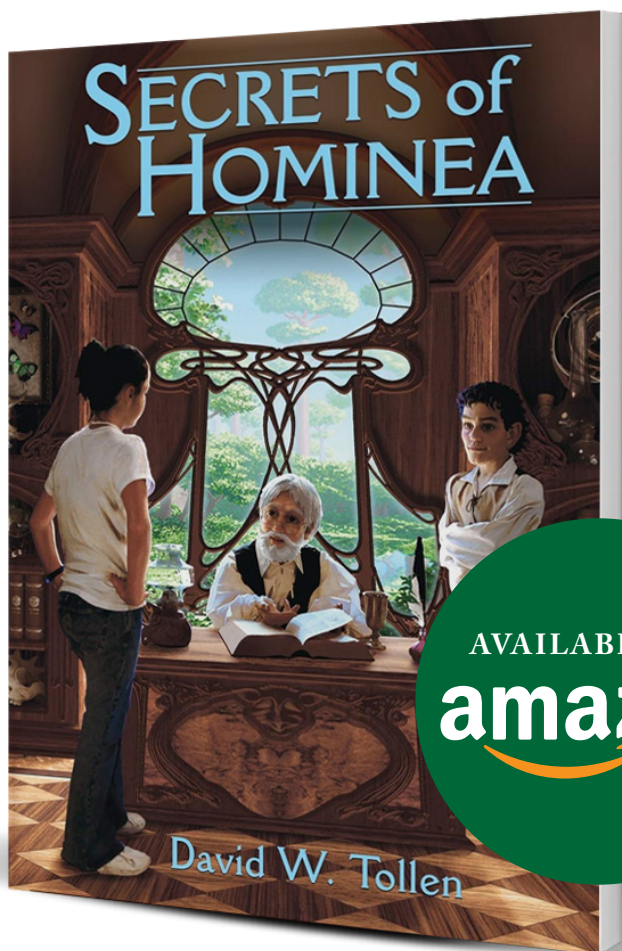
In his separate role as a lawyer and legal scholar, David lectures at UC Berkeley, and he speaks regularly at conferences, universities, and other venues. He also owns and runs his own training company.

David lives in Northern California with his wife and two sons.

CONNECT WITH DAVID: [in](#) [@](#)



KEEP READING — GET
YOUR FULL COPY TODAY!



AVAILABLE ON
amazon

BUY NOW

SHARE

